

I am happy to share with my colleagues Michelle's outstanding winning script by entering it into the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD:

DEMOCRACY—ABOVE AND BEYOND

(By Michelle Fortier)

Ever since I was a little girl, I can remember being told exciting accounts in American history, but it wasn't until recently that I began contemplating how these long and inevitable struggles have influenced my own life. Democracy must be the most powerful word in the English language, and so often I have taken it for granted. This word affects everything that I do, but I hardly ever noticed it. To the citizens of these United States, democracy is a way of life, but to people of foreign lands, it is a hope, a dream.

Now that I've almost reached voting age, I realize how much Democracy has meant to my life. In just one short year, I will take on the awesome responsibility of making decisions affecting my country. That is truly a wondrous privilege.

I used to wonder why people would be willing to fight and die for the principles we hold so dear today. It wasn't until I was older that I realized exactly what those people had been fighting for. Those early Americans were fighting for the rights of future generations to not have to live in fear. They fought for me, and I realized how much I had not acknowledged. All the choices and privileges I have come with a price, and it was paid through the blood and sweat of Americans, past and present. Americans who have gone above and beyond the call to duty. This preservation of rights has been the basis for all of America's conflicts ever since the footprints of pilgrims imprinted the sandy shores of Plymouth, Massachusetts because democracy is a never-ending process. Every decision we make or every right we engage in is a continuation of the ideals expressed so long ago.

Every time I turn on the news I hear stories of people of foreign nations struggling to gain their independence or even a single basic right, and I think, "Would I be willing to die for the sake of freedom for future generations? Would I fight to keep my country free? Would I go above and beyond what was dutifully expected of me? I'm sure all Americans who have seen war or conflicting times, such as depression or civil strife, have contemplated these questions. But to live in a country whose basis was founded on the dreams and visions of the brave men and women who came searching for more than their own personal gain and has been kept alive through the sacrifices of those willing to risk life and limb to preserve our nation's freedom is to have a proud heritage. We've seen endless accounts of this throughout this great nation's history. The horrors of Gettysburg, the friendlessness of the World Wars, to the struggles of the immigrants who came to America searching for opportunity and independence. They have all contributed to the dignified heritage I display as my own. It is truly an honor to have been born in a land that serves as a beacon of modern democracy.

From the recent free elections in Bosnia to the new democratic societies of the former, Soviet Union, we can see that democracy is growing like a virus. It infiltrates a group of people with such fury that it spreads to anyone close enough to experience it. More and more each day I realize that the voice of democracy can be silenced no longer. It screams in the souls of imprisoned people, and it's echoes can be heard all over the earth. People are standing up for their inalienable right to be free. People are finally going above and beyond.

IN HONOR OF THE HARMONIA-
CHOPIN SINGING SOCIETY

HON. DENNIS J. KUCINICH

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, September 11, 1997

Mr. KUCINICH. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to announce the 95th anniversary of the Harmonia-Chopin Singing Society. Since its inception in 1902, this organization has interacted with leading artists and performers and has participated in countless significant musical events. Among many other significant contributions to the city of Cleveland's cultural scene, in 1946, the society used concert proceeds to purchase and install a bust of Frederic Chopin in the Polish garden of Cleveland's Cultural Garden.

The Harmonia-Chopin Singing Society has remained committed to Cleveland's "Warswaza" community through participation in numerous events and through continued investment in the community as a whole. The dedicated members of the society have kept Polish culture and tradition alive and celebrated in the Cleveland area.

Once again, I salute and congratulate the Harmonia-Chopin Singing Society for 95 years of preserving, promoting, and sharing the Polish culture to people of all nationalities and races in the Cleveland area. I wish the group continued success.

MARY CHALFANT: DEDICATED TO
PRESERVING MORRIS COUNTY'S
HERITAGE

HON. RODNEY P. FRELINGHUYSEN

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, September 11, 1997

Mr. FRELINGHUYSEN. Mr. Speaker, today I rise to pay tribute to my constituent and friend Mary Chalfant. Mary recently retired after 21 years of dedicated service to preserving the heritage of one of our Nation's most historically important counties, through her work on the Morris County Heritage Commission.

Mary first became involved with the Morris County Heritage Commission when she became interested in one of the county's many Revolutionary War Era historical sites, the Lewis Condict House—home to the Women's Club of Morristown. She quickly became indispensable, serving as executive secretary of the commission. As current Heritage Commission Chairperson Nancy Knapp noted, "They don't make them like Mary any more." "She has been the heart and soul of the commission", added Frances Pingeon, a former chairperson of the commission. Mary's total dedication and deft communications skills made her an irreplaceable asset.

Throughout her years of service, Mary was instrumental in the Heritage Commission's most important projects. These include the commission's historic marker program, the wonderful tour brochures of Morris County municipalities, the 39 volume "Morris County Historic Sites Survey," and the "Highlights of History: 300 Years in Morris County" slide show, not to mention the many other brochures and annual publications on Morris County's rich history and fascinating historical sites.

A resident of Morristown since 1950, Mary Chalfant has devoted her efforts to other organizations as well, including Morristown Memorial Hospital, the Morris County bicentennial committee, and the Morris County Historical Society. Mary remains involved in the Woman's Club of Morristown and Saint Peter's Episcopal Church, also in Morristown. Anyone who has worked alongside Mary knows how her enthusiasm and warmth have touched thousands of people in Morris County and New Jersey.

Mr. Speaker, I want to commend Mary Chalfant for all her efforts with the commission and so many other organizations. She is a tireless worker, dedicated, compassionate and so very loyal to all she serves. I wish Mary all the best in her retirement from the Heritage Commission knowing that her work there with so many commissioners has assured that Morris County's rich heritage will be better preserved.

GARY KARNOPP: DISTINGUISHED
SERVICE AWARD, SAN DIEGO
BUILDING & CONSTRUCTION
TRADES COUNCIL

HON. BOB FILNER

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, September 11, 1997

Mr. FILNER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Gary Karnopp, an exemplary representative of the San Diego region. Mr. Karnopp is being honored with the Distinguished Service Award by the San Diego Building & Trades Council for his dedication to working Americans.

Mr. Karnopp is a carpenter and skilled tradesman, and as such has represented his brothers and sisters of the Carpenter's Union in a wide variety of positions, always working to promote higher standards of employment for building trades workers.

He has been a member and leader of his union during his entire career. For the past 24 years, he has been a business representative and office in a local union. He served 17 years as financial secretary for Carpenters Local 2398, and earlier this year was elected financial secretary of local 547. He has been a delegate to the San Diego District Council of Carpenters for 15 years. He has served both as a delegate to the Southern California Conference of Carpenters and to the Southern California-Nevada Regional Council of Carpenters. He is currently business representative for the southern California-Nevada region.

In addition, Mr. Karnopp is a long-time member of the East County Carpenters Joint Apprenticeship Committee, the San Diego County Carpenters Joint Apprenticeship Committee, and the Southern California Carpenters Overall Joint Apprenticeship Committee. He has served for two decades as a delegate to the San Diego Building Trades Council, 10 years on the executive board. He is also a 20-year delegate to the San Diego-Imperial Counties Labor Council.

His service extends to the greater community, as chairman of the personnel commission for the city of El Cajon, the east county advisory board for United Way, and a member of Masonic Lodge No. 576.